

**Statement of Robert Quint, Acting Deputy Commissioner  
Bureau of Reclamation  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
Before the  
House Committee on Natural Resources  
Subcommittee on Water and Power**

**HR 1503  
May 17, 2007**

Madam Chairwoman and Members of the Subcommittee, I am Bob Quint, Acting Deputy Commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation. I am pleased to be here today to give the Department of the Interior's views on HR 1503, the Avra/Black Wash Reclamation and Riparian Restoration Project Act. The Department does not support HR 1503.

H.R. 1503 would amend the Reclamation Wastewater and Groundwater Study and Facilities Act (43 U.S.C. 390h *et seq.*), to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to participate in the design, planning, and construction of water recycling facilities to enhance and restore riparian habitat in the Black Wash Sonoran Desert ecosystem in Avra Valley, west of the metropolitan Pima County area in Arizona. It provides for Federal funding of 25 percent of the total project cost or \$14 million, whichever is less.

Pima County intends to expand the 1.5 million gallon per day wastewater treatment facility to 5 mgd capacity. Currently, treated effluent is not reused. The proposed project would provide tertiary treatment and establish procedures to recharge the reclaimed water in ponds and the Black Wash. The treated effluent that was previously evaporated would instead recharge the aquifer, and state law would allow this recharge to be measured and stored as credits to be pumped at a later date. By recharging the water in the channel of Black Wash, riparian and wildlife habitat will be created, preserved and protected. The project includes plans to provide baseline ecological reconnaissance for monitoring of diversity and ecological health of the site.

The Department supports efforts to increase reclaimed water use in southern Arizona. Reclamation has been working with Pima County to review the technical, regulatory and contractual issues involved in the project but discussions have been preliminary. To date, the steps necessary to prepare a feasibility report that meet the requirements for feasibility of Title XVI projects have not been discussed. Because the technical studies are not complete, the feasibility and cost effectiveness of this project cannot be determined. Title XVI provisions require that these technical studies be completed and reviewed to determine the feasibility and cost effectiveness.

Moreover, of the 32 specific Title XVI projects authorized to date, 21 have received funding. The remaining estimated total authorized Federal cost share of these 21 active Title XVI projects is at least \$328 million. Given the costs of the currently active Title XVI projects, we do not support the authorization of new projects at this time.

While Reclamation does not support new authorizations for Federal cost sharing of water

recycling projects, we understand that the projects established by Title XVI are important to many water users in the West. To that end, Reclamation has set about revising and improving its Directives and Standards that govern reviews of Title XVI projects. By doing so, we believe that Reclamation can play a more constructive role with local sponsors in weighing the merits and ultimate feasibility of proposed water recycling projects.

Madam Chairwoman, this concludes my testimony. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on H.R. 1503. I would be happy to answer any questions at this time.